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Hung, drawn and Cultural Quartered: Rethinking Cultural Quarter Development Policy in the UK

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Abstract

Throughout the last two decades, cultural quarters have been used by many local councils across the UK as attempts to redevelop and revitalise declining urban centres. Using a common template of a 'flagship' cultural anchor and a contemporary urban consumption milieu, cities have spent millions of pounds developing cultural quarter policies, with justification coming from the prevailing rhetoric of culture revitalising the local economy and the creation of a 'cultural milieu' that stimulates creative industry activity. However, in many cases in the UK, visitor numbers remain lower than expected and in some cases, flagship projects have been sold off or closed down. High rents force out small and freelance creative industry actors, and (non-commercial) artistic interventions are strictly policed. Forming part of the wider debate on the political circumscription of the creativity paradigm, this paper argues that cultural quarters have been viewed within a predominately economic, binary and simplistic framework.

Using examples from Salford, Sheffield and Leicester and Newcastle-Gateshead, this paper will argue that there is a need for a more practice-based, subjective account of CQs that goes beyond a traditional framework. Furthermore, while culture foregrounds much of the rhetoric of urban redevelopment, the reality shows a clear promotion of a broad consumption of pseudo-cultural experiences often broadly corresponding to consumption in retail, leisure and entertainment, rather than supporting local cultural production, social services and creative communities in the long-term. The paper is not just a critical review analysis of

the power dynamics and policy imageries used in cultural quarter policies, but offers a way forward where CQs are articulated less by a narrow instrumental focus, but more on the broader array of process, practices and cultural subjectivities.

Introduction

Cultural quarters (hereafter CQs) have emerged in the policy imaginary and rhetoric of the last decades as tools for urban and economic regeneration across many UK cities and towns. Since the first 'experimental' and (sometimes) informal interventions in the 1980s in cities like Sheffield and Manchester, they have slowly become a structured, planned and formalised practice hailed as a solution to many socio-economic problems affecting UK cities pre and post-recession. However, the literature analysing these interventions is polarised between promotional 'how-to manuals' (Landry, 2006; Montgomery, 2008; Roodhouse, 2006) and critical case studies (Christophers, 2008; Evans, 2009; McCarthy, 2005; Moss, 2002; Porter and Barber, 2007; Shorthouse, 2004). It can be argued also that from the rapid growth of economic discourses around creative industries and creative cities, the attention towards CQs has increased exponentially. Indeed, as Oakley (2004: 68) noted, "no region of the country, whatever its industrial base, human capital stock, scale or history is safe from the need for a 'creative hub' or 'cultural quarter'". Nearly 10 years hence, this has proved the case as more cities develop CQs justified by, or linked to a cultural regenerative paradigm. However, to date, there has been a lack of literature that tries to identify the broader dynamics and consequences of these interventions as well as trying to systematise the forces and powers which drive the development of CQs across the UK, and hence couch these within the wider narratives of urban development theories. Moreover, the role of culture within a CQ as more than a consumption or production determinant has yet to be addressed holistically. This paper then, aims to address these concerns by first offering a critical review of the literature and the development of the concepts and ideas around CQs, considering its connections with other literature on politically co-opted creativity themes, such as creative clusters and creative cities. This will provide a background and critical framework for future analysis of CQ both nationally and internationally. Then, considering the key neoliberal forces and power relations behind the development of CQs, the paper proposes to move beyond a dualistic traditional framework of CQ development, to a more subjective, practice-based account of those activities are not captured by such a framework.

To this end, the rest of the paper is structured into three parts. First, we critically engage with the economically deterministic concept of the CQ and their role in the neoliberal development of cities, with particular emphasis on the political and economic valorisation of 'culture' within CQs as part of a consumption or production narrative. We also consider the hype surrounding CQ policy and their establishment as a new tool for urban governance structures in UK. In particular, we highlight some key neoliberal characteristics of this new management of urban space. In the second part we consider the importance of understanding issues of differentiated cultural values and stakeholders through a more inclusive, less instrumental account of CQs. This is developed through four case studies (Sheffield, Leicester, Newcastle-Gateshead and Salford) in order to highlight some of these key dynamics. Finally we draw conclusions from the case

studies in relation to the framework presented. In particular, we argue the result of this the proliferation of a standardised CQ 'template' has a deleterious effect on the space of local and differentiated cultural expression and creative commons, questioning how 'cultural' CQs actually are.

The Economic Determinism of Cultural Quarters

Before outlining the literature, it is pertinent to clarify what actually a CQ is, as there is an extensive literature on CQs, with varying (and sometimes ambiguous) definitions (see McCarthy, 2005; Porter and Barber, 2007; Roodhouse, 2006, Shorthouse, 2004). The concept's origin is linked to the development of locally based cultural industry policies in a few UK cities during the 1980s, namely Sheffield, Manchester and London. The emergence of new cultural scenes particularly clustered around often disused areas of these post-industrial cities, was seen as a great opportunity to maximise on the growth in consumption of cultural goods and experiences with possibility to re-design and re-develop declining urban spaces (Brown et al., 2000). However, since these first works on cultural industry clusters and artists' reuse of declining urban areas emerged, further connotations and arguments have been added to refine, define and classify the emergence and development of CQs within policy and local government vernacular. First – influenced by the DCMS definition of the 'Creative Industries' drawn up in 1998 – there has been a shift from the term 'cultural quarter' to adopt terms such as 'creative quarters' and 'creative hubs' (see Oakley, 2004, Evans, 2009). This reflects the wider shift to the urban policy lexicon toward 'creativity', which has been utilised more readily on the global stage (see Peck, 2005). Second, influenced by the literature on industrial clusters *a lá* Porter, some urban governments and policy institutions have instead talked of cultural districts and cultural clusters (Pratt, 2004). In both these augmentations of the initial CQ articulation (from the 1980s), they have used prevailing political economy narratives to couple CQ development to the economic regeneration of cities. In the former, they linked to the benefits of creativity and innovation, while in the latter, the economic advantages of agglomeration and local linkages are emphasised. However, in both cases, the broad definition of a clustering of cultural and creative activities remains relatively constant.

Some authors have tried to identify and classify the various definitional characteristics of CQs. Santagata (2002) proposed a classification based on the type of cultural goods and services supplied and the kind of knowledge that is generated and protected within the agglomeration. He distinguishes between industrial cultural district, institutional cultural districts, museum cultural districts and metropolitan cultural districts. The first two are based around the production of creative goods (either form an industrial based or from an institutional framework) the others are based on clustering of traditional cultural activities such as museum or other forms of cultural consumption such as cinemas and theatres. Institutions (public or private) play a key role in the historical establishment and development of cultural districts and therefore also in the classification. Legner and Ponzini (2009) offer a geographical classification of the range of activities across cultural clusters, cultural districts and cultural

quarters suggesting that the geographical scale and policy framework (bottom-up versus top-down) allows for a distinction between clusters or quarters; with clusters being more 'bottom-up', and quarters being more 'top down'. Such a simplistic binary however can obfuscate the often complex and institutionally varied process of CQ formation. Therefore, given the diverse range of terms and nuanced definitions, different political and urban institutions (and indeed some academic literature) adopt the terms interchangeably.

While reviewing these definitions and classifications is a viable starting point to discuss the development of CQs policy in the UK, it is also important to notice that often CQ (or clusters) have been considered as planning interventions, but lacking in an investigation of the institutional power and subjective contestations behind these activities and problematic effect of the narrowly-defined application of 'culture', as well as the role of smaller (economic and non-economic) cultural producers.

Furthermore, while in most of this literature there is an assumption that the production and consumption of culture come together in these spaces, very little attention has been placed on the real connections and supply-chain relations between consumption and production in CQs. In fact, if we look at the literature and case studies (for an overview see Chapain and Comunian, 2010), there seems to be general assumption that creative clusters place a stronger emphasis on economic production (Ettlinger, 2003, Crewe, 1996), which only spurs policy and public intervention. On the other hand, if talking about CQs specifically, then the emphasis is on consumption and while cultural producers are present, there is often an intervention in terms of planning or creation of a flagship institution (see Evans, 2009; Mommaas, 2004; Pratt, 2008). While in policy documents and rhetoric, there is a clear aspiration for the integration of consumption and production dynamic, there is very little research addressing this gap in the literature and studies so far have tended to focus either on the networks of productions or the role of cultural consumption and visitors' economy, creating a further dualistic premise in CQ characterisation. (such a dualistic framework is identified in more detail in the next section).

A more general critique of cultural-led urban regeneration is that it follows a neoliberal agenda (see McGuigan, 2005). CQs have not been immune to such a agenda as there are a number of descriptive accounts of CQs, often purported by those involved in the private consultancy institutions hired to initiate and promote them. Montgomery (2003, 2008) for example, outlines a detailed prescription for a successful CQ. Among a detailed list of consumption and creative industry production facilities, he argues that cultural activity in a CQ "should include production (making objects, goods, products and providing services) as well as cultural consumption (people going to shows visiting venues and galleries)" (Montgomery 2003, 296). The emphasis here (as has been also noted previously to be in the academic literature) is on the importance of production and consumption to the success of a CQ as the former creates wealth and profit, and the latter is the means by which it can proliferate. There is then a sense that a CQ is inherently a vehicle for wealth generation and urban redevelopment, or at least that is the primary, central function. Social

engagement and locally-sourced, community-orientated cultural activity often are lower down the agenda unless bonded to a profit-making operation.

The spread of the CQ across the UK speaks to the fact that urban regeneration is determining cultural activities along economistic and instrumental lines, and this is proliferating. By means of promoting particular urban locations, culture is being further promoted as a 'place making' tool, one that can be integrated into marketing strategies and used to attract tourists and other externalised capital resources. As such, the clamour to construct these CQs inevitably leads to the emancipation of privately-led CQ 'models' which in turn, produces the 'serial replication' of CQs across the country (McCarthy, 2005). Posited against the backdrop of the recent financial crisis and the onset of a coalition-led policy of austerity, the desire to spend money more efficiently only exacerbates inexpensive 'tool kit' CQs models, further creating homogenous urban landscapes under the rubric of the CQ as they are 'copied and pasted' across UK towns and cities.

These identifiable 'models' of CQs are evidenced through the material used to promote them. Montgomery (2008) for example suggests that there is a triumvirate of characteristics critical to the success of a CQ. They are *activity*, *built form* and *meaning*. Activity covers a range of cultural and creative economic activity from 'strength of small firm economy' to the 'presence of an evening economy' (Montgomery, 2008: 309). Second, the built form of the CQ must contain 'fine grained urban morphology' and 'amount and quality of public space' (*ibid.*). In analysing the built form of a CQ, he suggests that;

"In the more successful quarters this design ethos is carried through into architecture (modern, but contextual in that it sits within a street pattern), interior design (zinc, blonde wood, brushed steel, white wall) and even the lighting of important streets and spaces (ambient, architectural and signature lighting, as well as functional). All of these reinforce a place's identity as modern and innovative".

(Montgomery, 2008: 307 – 308)

Essentially, there is a suggestion CQs need very specific architectural styles and use particular materials that represent the contemporary working environments of the modern economy. While aiming to promote some original design-led style, the unreflexive take up of this approach has produced standardised spaces, with strong corporate aesthetics (Julier, 2005). Finally, the CQ has to have meaning, which Montgomery (2008: 310, original emphasis) argues centres around its culture, as "culture after all *is* meaning". However, what this 'meaning' purports to is chronically under-developed.

Landry (2006) and Roodhouse (2006) also forward an ideological premise of the CQ as a catalyst for urban change, one based on a prescription of processes, or in other words, a 'model of best practice'. These (often quite detailed) prescriptions of CQs, are of course not a derivative from the local urban council, but the architects, construction companies and interior design firms are part of what Wilson (2004) describes as variegated systems of processural space-

mobilising constructions. The networks of private companies, in negotiation with the commissioning councils will pinpoint the built form that is seen to be conducive to cultural and creative industry production. But in doing so homogenised office spaces and replicated 'incubator' spaces proliferate within CQs, narrowing the resource base for those cultural activities that do not conform or require these very specific (and often expensive) urban spaces.

As well as the presence of 'incubator spaces', CQ 'models' will often (in many UK cases) centre on a 'flagship' development. Often a large-scale cultural institution such as a museum, art gallery, major performance centre or cinema is built in the targeted locale with the projection of large visitor numbers and the promise of auxiliary and related cultural production businesses and institutions. Classic examples often cited within the literature include the Tate Modern in London (Newman and Smith, 2000), the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Plaza et al, 2009) and the Sage in Gateshead (Miles, 2005). These large-scale developments are however standalone instances of culture-led urban development, whereas more recent CQ initiatives have sought to use flagship developments as part of a wider strategy of urban renewal. The co-locational presence of these large purpose-built cultural institutions can create schisms with local cultural production. Indeed, as Newman and Smith (2000: 22) argue that "the land-value impacts of large venues and sites of cultural consumption work against small and marginal cultural enterprises [...] building up the image of a cultural quarter may itself encourage high-value uses and thus operate against small-firm relocation and start-ups".

Given the overall preponderance of economically deterministic characteristics of CQs (that can be linked to a neoliberal agenda of culture-led urban development (Peck, 2005)) that has been highlighted in this section, it is clear that there is a heavy reliance on CQ characterisation as an economically and politically charged narrative. However, the fundamental question remains somewhat unexamined, namely, where is the 'culture' within these CQs? Are CQs forever to be characterised as neoliberal urban regeneration schemes yoked to a production-consumption definitional nexus? This paper goes on to ask if there is a more progressive account with which to understand CQs are part of the urban fabric. The next section therefore will identify the existing framework of CQs (based on the literature analysed in this section) that is based on economically deterministic characteristics, and offer an alternative view which takes into account a suite of practices that are not captured by such a framework. Our aim is to highlight how these processes and institutions of small-scale cultural production, local engagement and/or long-term community development, while differentiated (perhaps marginal) from mainstream CQ discourse, can be included in a more subjective, practice-based account which articulates CQs more precisely.

Mapping UK Cultural Quarters: Power and Differentiated Cultural Values

We have seen in the previous section, how many classifications of CQs have been concerned with the mapping of different outputs, economic models and form of

CQ. Rather than considering levels of diversity in the nature of the cultural products or size of the cluster, we want to capture the alternative dimensions of CQ by considering issues of differentiated cultural practices that are not immediately economic, which will be illuminated by focusing on four case studies.

While the case studies represent a presentation of some specific trends and dynamics, they are also part of an analysis conducted on the broader UK landscape of CQ. The (on-going) analysis comprises of desk-based research on all CQ developments in the UK past and present. Utilising existing databases obtained from external private sources, and third party groups, a comprehensive list of all CQs in the UK was constructed. This was then augmented with other searches conducted on social media, news feeds and traditional online 'scavenger' techniques. Each CQ was listed, and a brief description attached to ascertain a basic level of categorisation into consumption- or production-orientated, and whether it was publically or privately facilitated. While a very rudimentary typology (and once based on existing and insufficient categories), the main aim of the database is to identify those areas that are designating themselves as CQs. In other words, if the phrase 'Cultural Quarter' (or one of the many derivatives thereof) was mentioned in the material to a sufficient degree, then the area was deemed to be so for purely analytical and typological purposes. Of course, it is possible to question whether that corresponds with the reality of an active CQ, but rather than imposing a definition *a priori* of what the CQ and what it should include, it is useful to consider how the term (and its policy and marketing power) is used to represent a broader series of initiatives and interventions. This self-selecting system gives a broad 'baseline' of existing CQs in the UK, with CQs that are 'in development' omitted from the list. Each CQ was then mapped online¹, to give an accurate geographical representation of each CQ. The geographical 'boundaries' of each CQ was either drawn from plans available online (through planning documents, maps on local council websites or from promotional material) or calculated using text (such as road names, cultural institutions, and in some cases, first hand experience of visiting the CQ). The map is open-access and 'live', and therefore is periodically updated to reflect the current status of CQs, and as such, it would be impertinent to offer up a definitive 'result' of it here. For example, in January 2013, Northampton officially announced it is to build a CQ (Michael, 2013). It has yet to pass planning approval and so will not be added to the map until it is completed, yet the processes and institutions involved are already in place and would therefore contribute to the dataset. While it will not be added to the database until it is completed, it does represent the rapid uptake of CQ as a policy, and therefore the advantages of mapping CQs in this way.

In mapping this extensive list of case studies and examples of CQ, it was clear though, that there is a tendency of local councils and urban promoters to oversimplify the concept of culture within CQ to an economic good; this was a basic characteristic across all the CQs. Another rudimentary delineation identified three characteristics of CQs. One based on a large cultural flagship

¹Available at <http://goo.gl/maps/1j6K>

institution as the main driver of growth; another based on the creation of functional and rentable 'incubator spaces' for creative and cultural production; and the third based on boutique and/or chain store retail developments, mirroring the broad production-consumption nexus by which CQs are characterised in the literature. This identified the key stakeholders involved in the development of CQs, as there is an assumed distinction between a CQ that develops organically (bottom up) versus a CQ that is developed via policy intervention or through an economic development partnership (top-down) (Legner and Ponzini, 2009).

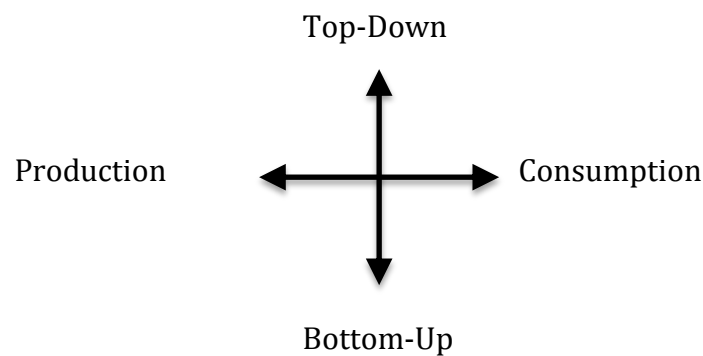


Figure 1: A traditional, instrumental framework of CQ development

Existing literature on CQs and their development have therefore mirrored each other. The dualistic frameworks that are purported (which have been analysed in the previous section) – one that is situated within a production-consumption nexus, or one that is 'bottom-up' versus 'top-down' (as visualised in Figure 1) – has a symbiotic relational existence with the development of CQs. In other words, the more such a model is perpetuated, the more systematic and replicative CQs become. As has been mentioned in the previous section, this overtly economic and neoliberal framework leaves little space (if any) for the exploration of the issue of where the 'cultural' is within the CQ paradigm. As such, we are proposing that an alternative ideology be taken up, one which moves away from the dualistic thinking of the current literature which has the outcome of creating a putative instrumentalism along prescribed economic lines. Such an ideology is not concerned with the creation of an alternative framework as such, but to emancipate the imbued cultural characteristics that are affected by the development of a CQ, but are currently not entirely represented by such a framework as seen in Figure 1. To do so requires not only a focus on how they are constructed (and the public-private nexus that entails), but also to identify those processes and institutional groups that are affected, but not already recognised; be they local residents, small scale cultural workers, or users in the longer term that are not yet articulable. We argue that by focusing less on frameworks and how they coerce CQ development to fit into a particular typology of design (i.e. a replicable model), and more on the practices and processes of those who build, use and are affected by CQs, then we can begin to realise a more culturally-sensitive ideology of CQ development; one that 'makes

room' for more of the cultural, social and community-orientated practices as well as the more economic neoliberal processes that build the CQs in the first instance.

In order to flesh out such an ideology, it is therefore useful to identify three 'processes' that are embroiled within a CQs development, but are 'hidden' in current frameworks and evaluative methods. These processes we have articulated as community impoverishment, precariousness and short-termism. The initiators of CQs have been well-versed above, and their public-private constitution problematized (e.g. Julier, 2005; McCarthy, 2005; Christophers, 2008; Evans, 2009). But, as we have suggested, this tells only one part of the story (namely the construction) and through an over-emphasis on that part, often the more subjective effects on the cultural impact of a CQ are negated (many of which have a deleterious effect on the culture of a CQ). So, we are proposing that these processes need to be brought into the qualitatively ideological constitution and evaluative reasoning of a CQ, rather than resting on an instrumental framework outlined in Figure 1. We of course realise that isolating such processes is, in itself, an instrumental process and can risk mirroring the very thing that we are looking to transcend. However, we see this is a starting point of inquiry, rather than a peremptory classification to be followed. We see this therefore merely as a 'step in the right direction', and have used such delineatory practices for the purposes of clarification.

The first process, which we see as embroiled within the current CQ development paradigm, is community impoverishment. There is often an entrenched incommensurable dichotomy in policy interventions and CQ development; they seem to cater either for tourists or for the local population, with the economic determinism prioritising the former to the social detriment of the latter (Christophers, 2008; Mommaas, 20004; Evans, 2009). As we have already seen, that this paradigm sees the promotion of a globalised consumption culture that homogenises, and can cause a location to lose individuality (Bailey et al., 2004). Such urban regeneration processes aim to offer the widest choice of cultural consumption and production opportunities, instead of rediscovering a sense of place, history and belonging, a process which is linked to a larger on-going debate on who should be the target for cultural development of cities (see Zukin, 1985). Such a trend to cater for visitors rather than embark upon more complicated and socially-inflected procedures to cater for local communities means local services suffer from lack of funding, and are often displaced (Donald and Morrow, 2003). As such, an oversupply of tourist-orientated retail and leisure functions (cafés, nightclubs, restaurants, cinemas etc.) coexist with a lack of community facilities or social services. Therefore a more socially inclusive CQ ideology needs to address such concerns. Purely commercial concerns need to be counter-balanced by non-economic, non-profitable services.

Secondly, there is the catalysing of precariousness. From the dataset collated in the CQ map, it is clear that often public policy makers and urban promoters will equate 'culture' with commercial cultural institutions and cultural flagship developments, i.e. something that can be built and consumed. During the CQ planning process then, while large cultural institutions, cultural partnerships and

investors find easy access to committee and planning discussions, this is often not the case for local creative industry firms, freelancers and practitioners. As such, the physical spaces are not designed with such production in mind. As the cultural and creative sector is populated mainly by small and medium size companies, freelancers and sole-traders (Mould et al., 2013), it is almost impossible for the voices and needs of the sector to be heard or to play a role in shaping CQs development. Therefore it is critical that any ideological articulation of a CQ needs begins to redress this imbalance, and start to incorporate the 'grass-roots' cultural enterprises (which will more often than not emanate from the local communities). These small firms and their workers (often freelance, part-time or interns) are often characterised as 'precarious labour' (Bain and McLean, 2013, Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hracs, 2009; McAuliffe, 2012, Ross, 2009). Such precariousness, rather than being guarded against by large-scale creative and cultural industry institutions, is instead glorified through the creativity paradigm. For example the recent trend of pop-up urbanism seems to glorify the precariousness of creative/retail work, celebrating the innovative and agile nature of such work. However, the realities are that the large majority of creative industry workers live subsistence lifestyles and struggle for their work (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Incubator spaces, temporary work spaces and the like are often part of a CQ provision, but if their rents are affordable, they are only so for the short-term. After a certain time period of residency, the subsidised rents are taken away and if the incumbents have not progressed to fully-fledged profitable companies, then it is difficult for them to stay, and so the cycle of nomadism starts again.

The third process that we propose is currently peripheral to CQ development paradigms is more abstract and perhaps universally applicable to the broader problems of neoliberal capitalist and political agency, namely 'long-termism'. When looking at CQ strategies and proposals, there is a clear tendency from planners and developers to adopt a short-term perspective (what has been widely been seen as 'short-termism' (Carley, 2000)); and such short-termism is a systemic quality which directly effects the other two processes. In other words, short-termism fuels the economic imperative to prioritise commercial services, often with the involvement of 'outside' companies and private investors, over investment in local services and amenities. It also implies that investments and support is spent towards starting the CQ (for instance with initial funding available for start-up companies) but very little in the way of support or guidance after the first few years of investments, and so we see precariousness increase. Furthermore, this also supports a new form of competition amongst cities and CQs, where attraction strategies and localised advantage might move / attract new companies (but only for a very short period of time). As Gray (2009: 19) argues "it assumes that every city can win in the battle for talent and growth. Creativity scripts, however, are better understood as "zero-sum" urban strategies constituted within the context of uneven urban growth patterns". However contrarily, some literature suggests that investing in 'grass root' creative industries can prove to be more beneficial; "the development of a viable indigenous sector is crucial to providing a long-term basis for employment in the industry" (Coe, 2000: 392). It seems therefore that by engaging with local communities, small-scale producers, a CQ can be more inclusive and 'culturally

robust', in that it is not predicated upon a narrow set of commercialised cultural provisions.

In light of the inclusion of other processes, it is possible to configure an ideology of CQ development that is more representative of the various stakeholders and institutions involved. We articulate this argument further with the use of **four** explorative case studies. Each case study will highlight and exemplify why a lack of focus on the process that we outline above (i.e. community impoverishment, precariousness and short-termism) has had deleterious effects on the CQ and surrounding communities. This will colour our argument and offer tangible realities as to why an ideology of CQs that includes our proposed subjectivities, offers are more culturally rich CQ.

Salford: MediaCityUK

The case of MediaCityUK as a CQ is perhaps one of the most controversial given the national (and some international) (in)famous exposure garnered during the planning, construction and first few years of operation (Christophers, 2008). It was initiated by the political desire for the relocation of a large proportion of the BBC's production facilities from London to Salford's MediaCityUK; and as such, was one of the major shifts in the UK's creative industry geography. The prevailing coalition government of the UK continued a Labour government proposal to decentralise creative industry production power from London, and at the end of a highly competitive, protracted and controversial process, MediaCityUK was built, housing the new BBC offices, among a community of other auxiliary creative industry companies, educational institutions and services. The financial backing of the project (estimated to be nearly £1bn (Mould, forthcoming)) was almost exclusively from private sources (with one real estate company the sole backer), creating a CQ (combined with the wider development of Salford Quays) that while politically and nationally foregrounded, is privately managed and resourced.

The area is characterised by high-end digital and technical infrastructure, with state-of-the-art production facilities, studio space and incubator offices (Mould, forthcoming). Chain food and retail outlets, hotel and entertainment facilities are also in situ in the wider locale of Salford Quays, along with the Imperial War Museum North and the Lowry theatre, art and exhibition space. The whole area is owned and managed by a single company. In order then to make the large investment financially viable, MediaCityUK and the Salford Quays is characterised by high-rise buildings housing business space and luxury accommodation, both of which come at premium rental rates. In so doing, the area has been characterised as economically uneven, with highly deprived wards surrounding the relative luxury of MediaCityUK, moreover, the council has had to divert funds from social services to cater for MediaCityUK's auxiliary services. For example, Salford Council spent £330,000 on a bus service between Salford Crescent Bus station and MediaCityUK. Such an endeavour is questionable given the expense and lack of funds the council has for more fundamental social services, given it has seen large budget cuts through the national government's austerity program (Salford Star, 2011). The more general socio-economic

critique of MediaCityUK and the wider Salford Quays area as a CQ has also pointed toward the lack of engagement with existing cultural infrastructure and creative community initiatives, characterising the overt 'top-down' narrative. An example includes the demolition of 'Graffiti Palace', a stretch of wall along the Orsdall canal which has replaced with commercial developments linked to MediaCityUK. The perceived lack of community and local level engagement serves therefore to ossify the view of the predominately economic priorities of the CQ as an urban locale, and the defenestration of community level offerings.

The area then is very much a CQ characterised by high-end production, consumption and a lack of local community cultural intentness. In essence then, any cultural provisions are very much of a professionalised, corporate nature that is utilised for distinct financial rewards in retail and leisure consumption on the one hand, and the production of cultural goods (although mainly media, television and advertising artefacts) on the other. MediaCityUK then presents a specific perspective that mirrors many other privately-led CQ developments in the UK (and indeed internationally); in that it is dependent on the commercial exploitation of creativity, and the deleterious effects on social provisioning that it inevitably entails.

Newcastle: Ouseburne Valley

The Ouseburn area is located one mile from the East of Newcastle city centre and has a history of industrial development and post-industrial decline. From the 1970s Ouseburn was declared an Industrial Improvement Area (the first in the Newcastle area) in response to changes in government policy aiming to revive derelict areas through industry. One part of the initiative involved the purchase of the empty warehouse located at 36 Lime St building (now called the Cluny) by Bruvvers Theatre Company in 1982, and they covered part of their costs by renting out un- and under-used spaces to individual artists, which later, was regularised into a co-operative. Alongside the co-operative a formalised Trust (called the Ouseburn Trust) formally set up in 1996; primarily out of fears that the prevailing urban development being undertaken by real estate developers could threaten the remaining Victorian heritage in the Ouseburn (Gonzalez and Vigar, 2010, Bailey et al., 2004).

Despite the issue of preservation of heritage and the battle with developers (something which is characteristic of a number of CQ developments in the UK), this case study highlights how a formalised CQ development policy can catalyse precariousness within the cultural workforce. Despite the proximity to the Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside, with its world-famous waterfront regeneration, Ouseburn has remained distinct and rooted in the working-class context of the area. Indeed, the role of the Ouseburn Trust was very much seen as an asset to the preservation of such socialities within the local community, something that was shared by the incumbent local artists, and cultural and creative producers who had been there since its inception in 1982. There was in essence, a perceived 'grassroots' community approach to development, mainly driven by local community (Comunian, 2011). However, this approach soon had negative repercussions as the area had often been marginalised in reference to the broader cultural development of the city, in particular in relation to the

mainstream culture-led regeneration taking place on the Quayside. For example, at the marketing and promotional level, Newcastle-Gateshead Initiative (NGI) developed the first 'cultural quarters' map of the city. In it, five CQs were included: the Quayside, Grainger Town, the Haymarket, Chinatown and Jesmond. The interpretation of what defined a CQ in this context was based mainly on the consumption of culture, either through the presence of big cultural institutions or boutique retail outlets. In this classification, no mention was given to the Ouseburn Valley which was the larger co-location of artists and creative practitioners in the area. However, with the refurbishment of the Grade II listed building at 30 Lime Street and the establishment of a new flagship cultural institution (the 'Seven Stories' national centre of Children's Book opened in 2005), there has been a growing attention towards integrating visitors' experiences and attraction with the growth of the local community of arts and cultural producers. Overall, the grassroots development of Ousebourne Valley is strongly linked to the affordable working space that it has offered to local artists and craft people. The establishment of the Trust has allowed local businesses and local artists to maintain lower rents again possible speculation. However, the pressure towards attracting more creative industries to the area, to create further economic development, has also been strong. This is often in contraction with the strong socio-cultural drive - rather than economic-drive - of these industries (Comunian, 2009). As a local policymaker commented during a research interview

"I think one of the ideas around is that we'd rather have economically viable creative industries, because then they are employing people, or they are run by people who spend a lot of time here, as opposed to amateur artists who maybe just have a cheap studio space and perhaps come down once in a blue moon".

The quote highlights on one side, the pressure on planning and policy making in achieving higher level of concentration (and creative productivity) in the area identified as CQ. On the other, it highlights the precarious working condition of creative worker and the push towards favouring economically driven creative activities rather than amateur artists or precarious workers which is common in many CQs.

Sheffield & Leicester: Short-term CQs.

Sheffield's CQ was one of the first to be developed in the UK. It was predicated on a pre-existing cultural vibrancy, which led to the development of the National Centre for Popular Music (NCPM) in Sheffield. Forwarded as a millennium project, construction was completed in 1998 and it officially opened in March 1999. Sheffield council commissioned the NCPM, drawing on lottery funding in an attempt "reassert the local within global cultural flows" (Brown et al., 2000: 440). Costing £15 million to build, the NCPM hoped to attract half a million visitors per year according to the promotional material. With poor visitor numbers and a failed £2 million re-launch as a live music venue, it was bought by Sheffield Hallam University in 2003 and is now their Student Union building. The

positioning of the NCPM in Sheffield's CQ was a deliberate ploy to stimulate the local creative industry community and compliment the vibrant music industry within Sheffield (Brown et al., 2000). However, despite the relative success of the surrounding incubator spaces and vibrancy created by the adjacent university, the low level of visitor numbers was not enough to maintain the centre economically, and hence it had no other option but to shut down.

The failure of the NCPM and the subsequent reuse of the building as Sheffield Hallam University's Student Union, purports to a number of different issues, but notably, the high levels of intervention from the council during its implementation in the 1980s (including the NCPM and infrastructure upgrading) were due to the desire for short-term job creation at a time of severe deindustrialisation in the city. Moss (2002: 215) argues;

“By the 1990s, cultural quarters... adopt[ed] the “mixed economy” model, including features for street animation, for night-time use, for mixed-use developments of living accommodation, specialist and essential shopping, workplaces, entertainment, pleasant outdoor spaces and eating/drinking establishments. Sheffield, having concentrated on the industry of cultural production, now lacked these elements”.

Sheffield's CQ, 10 years after these words is still suffering as a relic of an overtly production-focused interventionist short-term strategy, lacking the leisure and 'mixed' economy features outlined above, as well as the social and local cultural sensitivity that would retain users and residents. However, these perceived problems of Sheffield's CQ emanate from its comparison with subsequent CQs featuring a mixed economy *a la* the Montgomery model. Despite the failure of the NCPM, the area remains relatively productive in terms of its cultural industry activity, for example business spaces such as the Workstation have high occupancy levels and there are graduate employment links with the adjacent Sheffield Hallam University. However, the CQ is not the 'national' hub that it has hoped to be in the original remit as it remains an area predominantly devoted to production rather than consumption of cultural products, therefore adhering to the traditional models of CQ development (outlined in the previous part of this paper and in Figure 1).

Meanwhile, as the NCPM opened, Leicester city council agreed an ambitious project to build an innovate, multi-purpose performing arts centre, called Curve in the dereliction-ridden St. Georges area adjacent to the city centre of Leicester. In 2008, Curve opened having cost £61 million, nearly double the original figure quotes of £35 million. In 2009, the Audit Commission stated that there was “weak project management” (BBC, 2009: np) and that “Curve did not manage to control significant increases in cost” (*ibid*). Despite Curve coming in significantly over budget, the leaders of the CQ have argued the local area of St. Georges has benefit from like-for-like private investment since Curve was commissioned;

“We have accounted for approximately £60 million worth of private sector investment in the area... these buildings didn’t start to develop until we started to lay the foundations for Curve”.

(Candler, quoted in BBC, 2009: np)

However, given more recent developments in the wake of the financial crisis, many axillary leisure developments such as restaurants and bars have closed and been repossessed by landlords, with the business owners citing low footfall. Also, Curve received a £1.03 million ‘Sustain Fund’ from the Arts Council in 2010, a fund dedicated to help art institutions that are financially struggling because of recessionary pressures.

The development of Leicester’s CQ has also included the Phoenix Cinema which includes the Digital Media Centre, which has seven offices designed for short-term creative industry business usage (i.e. incubator spaces), and Leicester Creative Depot (LCB), another creative industry incubator space with 100 per cent occupancy. Located adjacent to Curve in St George area of Leicester, the Phoenix development is key flagship development of Leicester’s CQ. However, in 2010, it received a financial boost of £250,000 from the local council after managers admitted to local news outlets it was losing cash substantially. So, Leicester CQ, while still in a constant state of evolution, remains not without its problems – many of which have stemmed from the desire to replicate the ‘flagship’ model of CQ development in the short-term, and not focusing on practices and cultural activity that fall ‘outside’ of the remit the traditional production-consumption nexus of CQ development.

Conclusions

Looking at the extensive literature on CQ we could argue that much has been learnt about the development of CQ in UK in the last decades. However, looking more closely, we see homogenously designed urban spaces, failed flagships projects and the boom of private consultancy firms offering CQ design services, and the uncritical and unreflexive take-up of CQ as a neoliberalised ‘model’ of urban renewal across the UK. This has been done so, as been argued throughout this paper and highlighted briefly in the selected case studies, through a predominately traditional typological framework that is yoked to a perceived production-consumption and top-down-bottom-up axis. We have argued that more needs to be understood about the nuances and exact practices of CQ development that cannot be so easily identified as part of a production or consumption paradigm. While the discussion and analysis in this paper is more of an introduction and marker toward a more critical engagement with CQs, we have attempted to offer a more holistic and culturally-sensitive reading of CQ development that takes into account local communities, the effect on cultural work and the long-term (non-economic) goals. These are of course arbitrary groupings of practices to be sure, and other more nuanced and specific cultural and social idiosyncrasies could be articulated. But what they represent (and what we want to purport) is a move away from pragmatic instrumentalism to a focus on the practices of those affected by CQs, as this is what’s needed to fully appreciate the full impact of CQ development in any given area.

Without these subjectivities being referenced, there will always be one big question that remains: who are CQs for? Considering our case studies it seems obvious that commercial and economic power plays a key role in shaping the profile and nature of CQ and small-scale creative and cultural producers, and local needs and long-term goals are regularly squeezed out of the discussion. Furthermore, it seems obvious that in recent developments, the market-driven end of the creative industries (media, software, design) is being favoured rather than the more artistic and often less economically viable sectors (craft, performing arts, visual arts).

The role played by developers and rent value cannot be underestimated and can completely change the configuration of CQs (as is the case in Salford, with MediaCityUK being built and financed by one large property company (Christophers, 2008)). We have focus on the three different processes that we have seen as immediately obvious in terms of their non-consideration in CQ development. But what all the case studies (and many more that could have been used) demonstrate is a prioritisation of short-term gain in lieu of long-term planning, social sensitivity and non-economic cultural provisioning. While consultants tend to promote re-design and embellishment of public spaces for CQs, these actions are only leading towards the attraction of outside investors and large commercial entities that will empty the CQs of any locally incumbent producers who cannot afford the new rental spaces. And, those that can in the short-term are either priced out at a later stage or end up being displaced, adding to the precarious nature of their work.

Furthermore, the case studies and broader CQ analysis show the difficult balancing act needed to make cultural consumption, cultural production and fostering a cultural (non-economic) milieu work together in CQ. Thinking about these narratives together as a suite of inter-connected and conflicting processes, rather than as part of a cultural-production/top-down-bottom-up framework can help to deconstruct a rhetoric 'fast-urban policy' fuelled by a very narrow, and economically determined view of creativity and culture (Peck, 2005) which has dominated CQ policy to date. Rather than taking for granted that large cultural investments and CQs help local creative industries and the local community, it is important to consider what kind of tangible benefits they can provide and verify and evaluate if these benefits are tangibly felt, rather than theoretically forwarded.

The key question of what kind of culture is promoted and fostered in CQ development also needs further investigation. From this introductory analysis, it is clear that many CQs promote a culture of pure production and/or consumption, by either the institutional public culture (especially in flagship projects) or the leisure, retail and entertainment consumption culture. While enjoying restaurants and cafes can to be described as a cultural experience – if CQs are to engender the political rhetoric of improving the local cultural commons, CQs need a be substantially shift in their planning mantra. CQs pay very little attention to the role played by subcultures, informal scenes, community creative initiatives and general creative freedom of expression (for

example). Spaces tend to be highly regulated, securitised and often sanitised to cater for outside visitors and shoppers rather than communities sharing values and community cultural practices. Diversity and heterogeneity of cultures is often ignored – the culture of a cultural quarter is hence too narrow, and economically deterministic. It's time to really explore what kind of culture we want in a CQ.

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